1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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County Clare

ports were live animals and live animal products, such as butter.

Of these exports, of course, cattle were the most valuable item and represented the great export staple. They were likewise the crop to which most other produce could be devoted when not used as human food. That this kind of conversion of other stuffs into cattle could take place is to be seen in the figures for milk. Though the Free State produced in the year in question a total of 589,000,000 gallons of milk, including both whole milk and butter, comparing favorably with such an output as Switzerland's yearly 528,000,000 in 1923, only 43 per cent of it was exported, while in Switzerland the export was 67 per cent of the Swiss total.

The figures for exports introduce a new factor of difference between the holdings of large and small size and their populations. Small holdings do not share equally with large holdings either in the consumption of agricultural produce or in its export. In both consumption and export commerce in the Free State, small holders and large holders play distinct roles.

Taking the first of these considerations, the figures for consumption reveal the difference. The estimated human consumption of whole milk (as milk) was some 90,000,000 gallons, according to the statistical record of the year 1928,[17] of which 70,000,000 gallons were consumed by agriculturalists and 20,000,000 by the remainder of the population. It was estimated that on the farms 38 gallons were consumed yearly per person. But that is the figure for all farms. There is a considerable difference here between types of farms.

Thus, in this case, on farms less than 50 acres only 36 gallons per person per annum were consumed, it was estimated, while on farms of over 50 acres, the consumption was 42 gallons. In Munster, the chief milk-producing province,

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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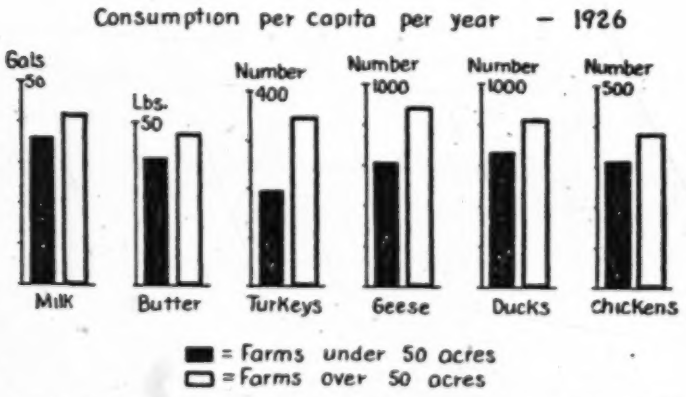
the difference is even more marked, the indices being 35 gallons and 44 gallons.

Similar differences hold as well for the consumption of milk as butter, a commodity of which the Irish consume more than any other civilized country. The difference between farms under and farms over 50 acres can be expressed in the spread between 40 and 48 pounds annual consumption per person. For poultry and for eggs, great farm diet staples, similar differences hold. On farms less than 50 acres, 197 turkeys, 601 geese, 672 ducks, and 3,177 ordinary

FIGURE 5



Notice that in each instance the smaller farms produce more, consume less. The great "money crop," cattle, which neither party consumes to any great degree, tells another story.

fowls, we are told, were consumed in the year in question, for every 1,000 persons living on such farms; while on farms over 50 acres, 325, 884, 873, and 3,823 are the respective figures. "As might be expected, the difference between average consumption on large and small farms of valuable fowl like turkeys is very marked." [18]

In the case of eggs, of those consumed per 100 persons on

[18] *Agricultural Output . . . , 1926–27*, p. 37.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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farms in January 1929,[19] the figures are for small farms 530, for large farms 582. All of these figures reflect a difference of diet the more marked because the small farmer population is so much the larger.

In Figure 5 this difference of consumption is represented in the form of blocks depicting the contrast between small and large farms. One could conclude quite rightly from this kind of picture that in each instance the smaller farms produce more per person at work and eat less. In terms of production, then, the small farm is the more productive. In terms of monetary return, it is a different story. Cattle, of course, are the Irish "money crop," much like cotton and wheat in parts of the United States.

Observation makes it clear that this difference of diet is more marked than even these figures reveal. But figures for other items of diet appearing in agricultural production are not available in correlation with farm size. The home consumption of meats from the farm animals, except pigs, is negligible among both kinds of farmers. Nevertheless, we can gain a substantial insight into the difference in meat-eating between large and small farmers when we realize that, out of the comparatively small total of 123,000 cattle and 504,000 sheep and lambs slaughtered for consumption in the Free State in 1926, a per capita count of average consumption by dressed weight gives such a predominantly large-holding county as Westmeath a weight of 34 pounds per consuming person, counties with large urban population rising higher, while the same count gives such a predominantly small-holding county as Mayo a weight of only 13 pounds. Clare, where small and medium farmers are predominant in the population, shows a similar small consumption of meat, a similar count giving only 19 pounds per person.[20]

In fact, the large farm population shares a meat diet with

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 48 and 49.

1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

the cities and larger towns that is unknown on the small farms. The fact is evident when it is observed that Dublin, Cork, and Waterford counties (each dominated numerically by the city of the name) count an average meat consumption taken on the same scale of 69, 40, and 37 pounds per capita respectively.

The difference between the two kinds of farm shows itself again strongly in the export trade from Ireland and in the roles of each in the transfer of farm produce to its ultimate market. The two kinds of farm make a totally different disposal of their produce, particularly their cattle. In this fact we see for the first time that in some regard they have a complementary role. Between them Irish cattle trade is carried on.

The huge internal Irish cattle trade is thus significant. It reveals itself in the figures as a movement from small farm to large, an interchange between the two kinds of farmers which shows once again their distinctness. The trade is both geographical and social, in the sense that it flows between two sections of Ireland and between her two great agricultural classes.

To get at the facts which show the case demands looking at the statistics of cattle in the Free State. These illustrate clearly how far the internal cattle trade shows up the great difference between the two types of farm. It is necessary to take into consideration the age groups of cattle in the various areas and in the possession of holders of various acreages in those areas. This roundabout course of determining the outlines of internal cattle trade is necessary because there are no barriers or *octrois* at which count might be made as the cattle move from dealer to dealer across the country.

The seven southwestern counties are the areas predominant in milch cattle production; they are the areas of the calf-producing cow. Clare is one of these. A chart of birth dates of cattle in various parts of Ireland demonstrates that

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

CHAPTER VII.

THE IRISH PEASANT HOUSE.

342 The Irish peasant house consists of a low single-storied rectangle, some 12 to 15 feet wide internally but of varying length, customarily thatched and whitewashed; but this generalised description embraces a surprising range of styles. So much abuse has been levelled at the Irish cabin that it is well to recall the opinion of a Swedish scientist who writes as follows:—"Lacking nearly every architectural consciousness and at the same time every kind of imported building material, the Irish peasant house never stands out in bold relief against its background but melts into it even as a tree or rock. Whenever the old building traditions are faithfully maintained its features are of a fine simplicity. The best Irish thatching gives the finest peasant roof in Europe."

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●571 The other side of the picture is the dirt and smells inseparable from the long habits of close association with livestock, so that within living memory, "cows and calves, men, women and children, horse and poultry were herded together in one apartment." Poverty and the rack-rent system have been blamed for this, but behind it lie facts of ethnology which are rooted in the remote past. Local authorities are striving to wipe away the stigma of the old order, and are spreading a "rash" of red-roofed cottages over the fair face of the country, but there is still a great mass of material for study.

[p. 57]

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

175 given leases and were accompanied by a clergyman of their own persuasion; the only original inhabitants obtaining leases were the Cormicks. This colony does not appear to have made any extensive change in the composition of the population, as the settlers after a time ceased to be agriculturists to any extent, and took the natives of the district on to their lands as tenants. A curious petition to Sir Henry Bingham, Governor of Connaught, in reference to the revenge taken on these settlers by the natives, shows the names of those in the district in the reign of Queen Anne, and of these but two now remain, all the rest having disappeared, a fate which is ascribed by Mr. Knight to the habits of extravagance induced by the nature of their life. Sir Arthur Shaen began the canal across the neck of the Mullet, but soon abandoned the project, which was not revived until after the foundation of the town of Belmullet. Sir Arthur's two daughters, he had no sons, married, one Henry Boyle Carter of Castlemartin, county Kildare, and the other John Bingham Esq., Newbrook, county Mayo, and the property was divided between these two.

In the year 1793 a fight took place in the Mullet between the local yeomanry and the people of the district, in which thirty-six of the latter were slain. The origin of the fight was the opposition to the enrolment of the militia, then causing a great stir in the west of Ireland. Major Bingham having come to reside in the Mullet in 1796 built Bingham Castle at Eley, and began to make some roads and reclaim some of the land. The first road into the district was made in 1823, and about the same period Major Bingham founded the town in the Mullet known as Binghamstown, which at first was fairly prosperous and had at one time a population of 673.

In 1823 the first vehicle entered the Mullet, and in 1824 Mr. W. H. Carter founded the town of Belmullet at the neck of the peninsula. This town being more favourably situated, has completely destroyed its rival Binghamstown, which, though once containing some fine buildings, is now in ruins, and contains only about a dozen inhabited houses. From the time of the establishment of Belmullet and the construction of good roads into the districts, the condition of the people has [511] shown steady improvement, though it is still extremely primitive and poverty-stricken.

VIII.—Concluding Remarks.

174 This report being, like its two predecessors, a record of available facts, as found, in order to form a basis for comparison between different parts of the country, all advocacy of personal theories or opinions

12: Freeman K-5 (1954) 1958
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

[p.205(c)]

311 bor, and then with no break to Cloon-
amore on the east side.

This island has a planned landscape.
311 The roads of the commonage pastures
657 and peat bogs have been built under relief schemes and the farms include seven acres of improved land, "striped" or defined by the Congested Districts Board after the land was acquired from its owner, Mr. C. Allies, in 1907.[10] Since then new houses of concrete, with
342 a concrete floor, roofed with asbestos
● 511 slate or, rarely, ordinary slates, have
657

[10] Congested Districts Board for Ireland, 18th report for the year ending March 31, 1909, Cmd. 4927, p. 139. The price paid was £8301, including £401 for tenants' interests. Up to March 31, 1915, £7047 was spent on the island, 23rd report, 1915, Cmd. 8076.

342 been built for almost the entire popula-
511 tion. In 1893 it was said that there
[657] were no outbuildings or cattle-sheds, so that peat was stacked in a corner of the cottage with the fowls roosting on it, the pigs in a pen beside the fireplace, the cattle in a pen at the other end of the room, and the farm implements and
[343] fishing tackle in the rafters.[11] Now the old houses are the outbuildings, still thatched, with oat straw (not rye as formerly) laid on sods and tied down with home-made straw ropes weighted with large stones. Only five thatched houses were still inhabited in 1954. Some of the thatch has sprouting oats and some of it is rotten, but, when a roof is beyond further repair, it is all stripped off and the sodding and thatching begins again. Happily, corrugated iron is not used as it cannot stand the weather.

Farming

241 Agricultural practice is almost uniform: an acre or so is divided between oats, potatoes, and—in a few cases—barley, and there is generally a small patch of turnips, mangolds, and, less frequently, cabbage (Fig. 2). Onions, carrots, and parsnips were rarely seen. The ground used for crops is called the "garden," and its fertility is maintained by using animal manure and seaweed, and also by rotating the crops. Strange (or "foreign") seed is favored, and
[657] bought at a cheap rate under a government scheme. The remainder of the farmstead consists of a varying amount of meadow, generally 1–3 acres, and some pasture. The precious crops are
[231] carefully walled, but some of the farmers open their fields to the cattle and sheep after the harvest, partly as a means of natural fertilizing.

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439 Each farmer has one or two cows and

[11] C. R. Browne, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

[p. 206(A)]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

century we find a description from Ulster: 'In the bosom of the Mourne Mountains there is a place called the Deers' Meadow to which great numbers of poor people resort in the summer months to graze their cattle. They bring with them their wives, children and little wretched furniture, erect huts, and there live . . . and often cut their turf.'[1] A century later a fuller account of a more complicated transhumance, reminiscent of the Norwegian seaboard, comes from Donegal: 'It often happens that a man has three dwellings—one in the mountains, another upon the shore, and the third upon an island, he and his family flitting from one to another of these habitations . . . This change usually takes place upon a fixed day, the junior branches of the family generally perform the land journey on the top of the household goods with which the pony may often be seen so loaded, and at the same time so obscured, that little more than the head can be observed; and thus the chair or two, the creels, and the iron pot, the piggin, and the various selected et cetera . . . creep along the roads.'[2] The author goes on to comment on the restrictions imposed on the comfort and possessions of the peasants by their 'Arab mode of life'. In Achill Island too the movements were complicated, involving the entire population which, having moved to the summer pastures and sowed their corn, returned to the permanent coastal village for the high summer to fish and went back to gather the harvest at the booley in the autumn.[3]

For the most part we are dependent on folk tradition for details of booleying. The Ordnance Survey Letters written in the 1830s contain valuable material from Counties Antrim and Londonderry, and the following extract relates to the parish of Dunaghy: 'Some of the very old men of the country recollect seeing the boliehouses inhabited. They were built of sods upon a foundation of earth and stones and were thatched with heath. Many of the poorer sort lived here in summer grazing the cattle upon land that nobody appears to have claimed and supporting themselves upon their milk and blood which they took from

[1]W. Harris, *The Ancient and Present State of the County of Down* (1744), 125.
[2]Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 24.
[3]An account by Sir William Wilde, written in 1836, is contained in Wood-Martin, *The Rude Stone Monuments of Ireland* (1888), 238.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

them occasionally. To render the latter more palatable they are said to have mixed it with the leaves of the wild sorrel.'

In Achill a few old people still nostalgically accompany their cows to the old booleying grounds, but everywhere else the system has died out completely. Many hilly districts, however, are open runs for summering stock which are visited periodically or placed in charge of a herd. This system was prevalent in the early nineteenth century and is thus described in the Ordnance Survey Letters for County Londonderry, parish of Upper Cumber. 'Herds are partially employed, males and females indiscriminately, who tend the cattle in the summer on the moors and mountain farms. They are from ten to sixteen years old and are paid for that half year from 15s. to 21s. In winter they return to their parents, who are burdened with their support from November to May.' In theory the total number of grazing units in a commonage is calculated and the units allotted to each landholder in proportion to the size of his farm—originally to his share in the openfield. The unit is known as a collop (in Ulster and Mayo a sum—the Scottish equivalent) and is the amount of pasturage that will support a cow. The sums may be taken up by other animals, and a scale which varies slightly from one district to another gives the equation. Thus a sum equals three parts of a horse, four sheep, eight goats or twenty geese. With the decline in the utilization of the hill-pastures and the general breakdown of traditional practices, grazing rights on commonages are neglected and stinting is rarely operative.

The observant walker in the hills will notice in sheltered hollows by the banks of streams clusters of grassy mounds set in a green sward, or it may be small piles of stones under some rocky outcrop. These are the only tangible relics of the booley houses, and in most parts of Ireland they were deserted so long ago that the shepherd will tell you they are the remains of Danes' houses.

Only where the huts were stone-built are the remains easily recognizable. In Achill Island they are oval in shape, or rectangular with rounded corners, and many have the opposite doorways which are still characteristic of the winter dwellings. In some bogland areas where place-names and traditions tell

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

visits ranging in length from one to seven weeks between 1961 and 1966 to complete our project. During the 19 months that we dwelled on the island, most of our research was directed toward documenting the contemporary culture of Inis Beag: its technological, economic, political, social, religious, esthetic, and recreational aspects. We also investigated informal and formal education and the personality traits created by it, reconstructed Inis Beag history of the past century by examining historical materials of many sorts and probing the memories of elderly respondents, and recorded cultural change in process.

The research techniques that we employed are standard ethnographic ones: the guided and open-ended interview, external and participant observation, collection of life histories, photography, and phonography. Two departures from methodological orthodoxy were our use, as projective devices, of literary works and a sixty-two-verse ballad that I composed. A dozen islanders of both sexes and three age groups read at our request three books portraying Inis Beag culture, and we recorded and analyzed their varied responses. My ballad, now embedded in the island folklore tradition, is based on a shipwreck and rescue off Inis Beag that we witnessed, and a series of incidents which ensued during the following months. Alterations made by local singers after it was completed and the reactions to it by the islanders gave us insights into Inis Beag culture and personality which would have been difficult to obtain under other circumstances of fieldwork. I must add that the ballad was a product of exuberant cultural involvement and the satisfactions of "creative endeavor." Its research implications were unanticipated.

The Inis Beag islanders qualify as folk people in almost every respect, according to anthropological definition (Lewis 1960:1): the population has maintained its stability for at least two hundred years; there is a strong bond between the peasants and their land, and agriculture provides them with the major source of their livelihood; production is mainly for subsistence and is carried on with a simple technology, which includes as primary implements the digging stick, spade, and scythe; the island folk participate in a money economy, but barter still persists; a low standard of living prevails, and the birth rate is high; the family is of central importance, and marriage figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare; the island is integrated into the county and national governments and is subject to their laws; the people long have been exposed to urban influences, have borrowed cultural elements from other rural areas on the mainland, and have integrated them into a relatively stable system; and, finally, the experience of living under foreign rule for over three centuries has created in the islanders an attitude of dependence and, at the same time, one of hostility toward the government which continues to this day. The only conditions in Inis Beag which run counter to those in most other peasant groups are low death and illiteracy rates. The Irish shun the term peasant as applied to individuals or communities, for the same reason that elitists in developing countries eschew the term primitive as applied to traditional cultural forms found in societies incorporated into newly formed states. The causes of this attitude must be examined next.

During the past hundred years, Ireland has experienced a vigorous nativistic movement—provoked by seven centuries of English domination, linked with nationalism as the Irish sought to assert their independence, focused on the

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

2

The Land and the Sea

Standard of Living

THE STANDARD OF LIVING of the folk has improved vastly since the establishment of the Irish Land Commission in 1881 and the Congested Districts Board ten years later, and the islanders are better off today than the inhabitants of some other areas of the Gaeltacht. In 1891, the Congested Districts were delineated as regions in which the population did not possess sufficient land to maintain life except at an extremely low standard. Between that year and 1951, the population in the districts declined 42 percent—from 541,000 to 367,000 persons. The few areas which would rank as congested now, on the 1891 basis, are mainly in Cos. Donegal, Mayo, and Galway (Freeman 1960:121–123). A vigorous and continuing effort to stem the tide of emigration, in part caused by poverty, led the commission, the board, subsequently the Gaeltacht Eireann which replaced the board after 1925, and other government agencies appointed in this century, to improve the standard of living by various actions: the enlargement of land holdings for more effective farming, the encouragement of small factory and domestic industries, the improvement of fishing, the construction of public works, and the introduction of various subsidies. Seasonal laboring in England, often practiced out of necessity by mainland farmers but not by the islanders, and remittances from relatives who have emigrated are income sources which also have served to alleviate poverty; but the major palliative throughout Ireland has been emigration. One of the factors limiting migration from Inis Beag to the mainland until recent decades was the low standard of living which prevailed in the country at large. An islander could not escape local hardships and privations by emigrating to urban centers as he can today; he had to turn his back on Ireland.

Most Inis Beag people believe themselves to be materially poor, although they resent others agreeing publicly with this view. A well-known Dublin newspaper feature writer in 1963 was denounced, and a vow made not to permit him to

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

611 829 come ashore in the future, for his use of the term poverty when describing Inis Beag life in a series of articles. The islanders, however, constantly complain of their indigence privately and deprecate it and are embarrassed by it in the presence of strangers. Girls and young women are particularly disparaging, and elders are puzzled by this attitude because the lot of youth is so much easier than was that of their mothers and grandmothers. Those persons who extol island existence usually do so in a defensive manner; after conceding that goods are in short supply, albeit "no one suffers from want of food or clothing," they go on to stress the healthy climate of the island, the freedom and independence that they enjoy, the sanctity of Inis Beag and its many saints of the past, and the strength of Catholic belief. Sometimes the advocate is followed by a denunciation of urban life, where these essential characteristics are lacking, or by a recounting of the difficulties being encountered by a relative just arrived in Boston or London.

433 241 233 The subsistence economy of Inis Beag always has been dominated by agricultural pursuits, contrary to frequent assertions by writers that farming was subsidiary to fishing two generations ago. Most householders own land on which they grow potatoes and other vegetables, grass, and sometimes sally rods, and where they pasture cattle, sheep, goats, horses, and asses. Potatoes are the staple crop, and after they are harvested the land usually is seeded with grass and used as pasturage for a number of years before being replanted. Indigenous soils bearing grass at the back of the island also serve as pasturage, and horses and asses at times [262] are permitted to roam the trails and common land to forage whatever they can from the meager flora there. Supplementing potatoes in the diet are various vegetables, milk from cows and nanny goats, meat from island sheep and poultry, [342] fish, and other foods, many of which are imported and sold in the shops. Rye is [343] grown for thatching houses and contiguous outbuildings, as well as barns located [493] south of the terrace crest, and sally rods are used to weave several types of containers. The only vehicles in Inis Beag are three two-wheeled carts employed to transport heavy loads, such as building stones, along the rough and narrow trails. Most householders own asses or horses, often ridden, which carry burdens in baskets 433 or pull carts. Other subsistence activities are knitting, weaving, crocheting, tailoring, 28 shoemaking, and net making, although the last skill almost has died out.

433 [437] A slowly expanding cash economy features the export of cattle and sheep reared or fattened in the island and of surplus potatoes, the collection of seaweed for extraction of its iodine content at a mainland factory, the manufacture of [28] craft objects, and the keeping of tourists in private homes. Among the craft commodities produced are cable-knit sweaters, miniature *curach*, stockings knitted at the local factory in the coast guard station, and articles of clothing worn by the folk—woven belts, cowhide shoes, and shawls. These goods are sold both to visitors [657] and to middlemen who resell them in Ireland and export them abroad. The cash economy is buttressed considerably by government subsidies of many sorts and [651] by remittances from emigrant kin. Not only are income and property taxes not [429] collected in Inis Beag, but rents are extremely low, both of which conditions rep- [124] resent indirect government subsidization. Income information is as difficult to come by as data concerning pagan supernatural beliefs, disputes, and sexual atti-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

> Obfuscation is the rule, and while it may seem a little foolish at times, there is no doubt that it makes for a great deal of fun. It cultivates too a sharpness of ear, a feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and a wary alertness that would be worth its weight in gold should one ever be lost in a jungle (Tracy 1953:20–21)

The quotation in some measure applies to interviewing in Inis Beag, where my wife and I took great pains to disentangle real from ideal culture by substantiating interview data with observation wherever possible.

The existence of the conditions depicted by Tracy, as well as the numerous cultural practices shrouded in secrecy, led us to return to the island several times after 1960 before I attempted this book, to emphasize various modes of participant observation, to devise *ad hoc* research methods of an unorthodox nature, to "hone" our orthodox tools and employ cross-checking techniques at every stage of our project, and to cultivate that "sharpness of ear . . . feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and . . . wary alertness" which so distinguishes ethnographic endeavor as an art as well as a systematic epistemology. The use by many folk of "wings of fancy," "honeyed words," and "obfuscations"—popularly known as "blarney"—reflects a long tradition of verbal skill. It is a vital component of Irish and Inis Beag "charm," which often is the product of a delicately poised set of defense mechanisms; beneath it can lie feelings of inferiority and dislike, envy, and jealousy of others. Blarney can serve very effectively to shield genuine thoughts and feelings and thus defend the ego. Irish folklore and literature also reflect this tradition, and it is probably expressed most formidably in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* (At least one Irish folklorist has collected "Joycean" utterances from peasants.).

Prestige Status

Inis Beag lacks a class system, and the status symbols which affect human relationships are few. That land and capital—known collectively as "money," "wealth," or "riches"—are the major symbols is revealed in the frequently heard phrase, "If you have money and your health, you're all right." (Health alone is mentioned by those of lesser means.). The men of highest prestige are the king and the 13 who own 24 or more acres of land. But they and their families do not interact more with one another than with others, for, as we have noted, the web of kinship rather than the possession of status attributes largely determines who will interact with whom and in what manner. Nor is their style of life different from that of other islanders, since material possessions and social etiquette are relatively unimportant in the status system. Although the king is a "man of few gardens," his capital, charismatic personality, and "connections" with priests, politicians, and civil servants earn him his high position in the status hierarchy. The prestige which comes with land ownership is based more on the fact of its possession than on the potential wealth that it represents. Men with large holdings can, of course, build more fields and on the increased acreage raise more cattle and sheep and grow more surplus crops for sale, but few take advantage of this oppor-

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

Celts. But local legend, historical evidence, and genealogical data collected by my wife and me indicate that the present population is descended from immigrants who came to the island from many parts of Ireland following the Cromwellian incursion of the seventeenth century. The islanders still express bitterness over conditions of poverty and servitude experienced by their ancestors during the 300 years that they lived under absentee Anglo-Irish landlords. All of the excesses of foreign domination suffered by mainland peasants were suffered by the inhabitants of Inis Beag, but were aggravated by the ordinary hardships of island living. Little was known about events in Inis Beag during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until the island was visited by archeologists and publicized in their scientific writings. The surrounding area of the mainland was very much isolated and seldom visited at that time, although trading between Inis Beag and nearby communities was carried on, and passing ships sometimes called at the island.

Agricultural pursuits have always dominated the subsistence economy of Inis Beag. Most householders own land on which they grow potatoes and other vegetables, grass, and sometimes rye and sally rods and where they pasture cattle, sheep, goats, asses, and horses. The back of the island, behind the communities, is divided into four strips, and each landowner possesses numerous plots located along the "quarter" on which his village fronts. The average combined holding is sixteen acres, and almost 50 percent of the land is composed of arable indigenous and manufactured soils. Potatoes are the staple crop, and they are supplemented by various other vegetables, milk from cattle and goats, meat from island sheep, fish, eggs, and other foods, many of which are imported and sold in the shops. Rye is grown for thatching, and sally rods are used to weave several types of containers. Other subsistence activities (which also provide income for some folk) are knitting, weaving, crocheting, tailoring, and sandal making.

A slowly expanding cash economy features the export of cattle and sheep fattened on the island and of surplus potatoes and fish, the collection of seaweed for extraction of iodine at a mainland factory, the keeping of tourists in private homes, and the manufacturing of craft objects for sale to visitors and for export. At the turn of the century, fishing from canoes—with nets and lines often many miles out in the ocean—was an important subsistence and income activity. A few islanders who owned little or no land lived primarily by fishing and kelp-making. But over the past few decades, fish have become less plentiful and the weather more inclement, especially during winter